Core 20 to Learn First

Learn these 20 first — they cover most notes:
w/ = with
w/o = without
b/c = because
& = and
@ = at / about
→ = leads to / results in
↑ = increase / up
↓ = decrease / down
= = equals / is
≠ = not equal / is not
> = greater than / more than
< = less than / fewer than
% = percent
∴ = therefore
∵ = because
★ = important / star this
? = question / unclear — check this
TODO = to do
DEF = definition
EX = example

Action Marks

TODO = to do
TBD = to be decided
DEF = definition
REV = revise / review
MEM = memorize
Q = question
A = answer
DONE = done / finished
SKIP = skip for now
LATER = come back to this
CHECK = check this / verify

Arrows and Cause / Effect

→ = leads to / results in / then
← = comes from / caused by
↑ = increase / rise / up
↓ = decrease / fall / down
↔ = between / both ways / relates to
∴ = therefore / so
∵ = because / since
⇒ = implies / therefore (stronger)
⇑ = big increase
⇓ = big decrease
↗ = rising / increasing trend
↘ = falling / decreasing trend
↻ = cycle / repeat / return to
∴ in maths notes, use ∴ for a conclusion and ∵ for the reason before it.

Math and Comparison

= = equals / is
≠ = not equal / is not
≈ = approximately equal to
> = greater than / more than
< = less than / fewer than
≥ = greater than or equal to
≤ = less than or equal to
% = percent
‰ = per thousand (rare in notes)
Δ = change / difference
Σ = sum / total
+ = plus / increase
- = minus / decrease
× = multiplied by / times
÷ = divided by
√ = square root
∞ = infinity
π = pi (approx. 3.14)
~ = approximately
± = plus or minus

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Math and Comparison (cont)

: = ratio (e.g., 2:1)

Importance Marks

★ = important / must remember
☆ = less important / note later
? = question / unclear — check this
! = surprising / watch out
KEY = key point
NOTE = note this
REM = remember
IMP = important
EXAM = likely on the exam / test
CHECK = check this / verify

Everyday Words Shortened

abt = about
thru = through
cd = could
wd = would
shd = should
smth = something
sm1 = someone
b4 = before
2 = to / too
4 = for
u = you
ur = your
yr = year
w = with (short form; see w/)
bk = book
ch = chapter
pg = page
info = information
govt = government
dept = department
org = organization

Everyday Words Shortened (cont)

assoc. = association
approx. = approximately
intro = introduction
concl. = conclusion
prob. = problem / probably (from context)
ans = answer
ques = question

Everyday Connectors

w/ = with
w/o = without
b/c = because
vs. = versus / against
& = and
@ = at / each (in prices)
~ = about / approximately
+ = plus / and
- = minus / except
/ = or / per
// = also / and also
< = less than
> = more than
btw = by the way
esp. = especially
approx. = approximately
approx = about
viz. = namely
incl. = including
excl. = excluding
re: = regarding / about
cc = carbon copy / also (in notes: see also)
NB: in fast notes, use & and / instead of writing 'and' or 'or' every time.

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How to Use It

Replace words you write often with a short symbol or abbreviation.
Use the same symbol every time.
Keep your personal key (last box) up to date, so your notes stay readable later.

Time

AM = morning
PM = afternoon / evening
min = minute
sec = second
hr = hour
day / wk / mo / yr = day / week / month / year
now / tmrw = now / tomorrow
yest = yesterday

People

♂ = male
♀ = female
ppl = people
pers = person
fam = family
frnd = friend
teach = teacher
stud = student
prof = professor
govt = government

Place

@ = at (place)
loc = location
addr = address
N / S / E / W = north / south / east / west
St = street
Ave = avenue
Rd = road

School Shorthand

Fig. = figure
Eq. = equation
lab = laboratory
expt = experiment
hyp. = hypothesis
ctrl = control (group / variable)
bk = book
ch = chapter
pg = page
ans = answer
ques = question

Science and Biology Shorthand

DNA = deoxyribonucleic acid
RNA = ribonucleic acid
ATP = adenosine triphosphate
temp. = temperature
conc. = concentration
rxn = reaction
soln = solution
bio = biology
chem = chemistry
phys = physics
org = organism
cell = cell
mit = mitosis
mei = meiosis
photo = photosynthesis
resp = respiration
vol = volume
mass = mass
vel = velocity
accel = acceleration
freq = frequency
λ = wavelength
Δ = change (see Math and Comparison)

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Latin and Formal

i.e. = that is / in other words
e.g. = for example
cf. = compare (with)
N.B. = note well / pay attention
et al. = and others (authors)
etc. = and so on / and others (things)
viz. = namely
vs. = versus
approx. = approximately
ca. = about / circa (dates)
ibid. = in the same place (source)
op. cit. = in the work cited
re: = regarding
per = by / through
via = by way of
pro = for / in favour of
con = against
ante = before
post = after
pre- = before (prefix)
inter = between
intra = within
sub = under / below
super = above / over

Amount

no. = number
amt = amount
qty = quantity
max = maximum
min = minimum
approx. = approximately
~ = about
$ = dollars / money
¢ = cents

Margin Labels for Labelling Pages

Write these in the margin to find a page at a glance:
TITLE = title / topic of the page
KEY = key point on this page
DEF = definition on this page
EX = example on this page
Q/A = question and answer on this page
EXAM = exam material on this page
DATA = data / figures / results here
WHY = why it matters / reason here
LINK = links to another page / topic
CHECK = check this / verify this page
TODO = work still to do on this page
REV = revise this page

Your Personal Key

This space is left for your own symbols.
Add a symbol or abbreviation here only when you start using it regularly, and write what it means next to it — so your notes stay clear when you read them back later.

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